

Fun with Call Numbers

by Cherie Heaser

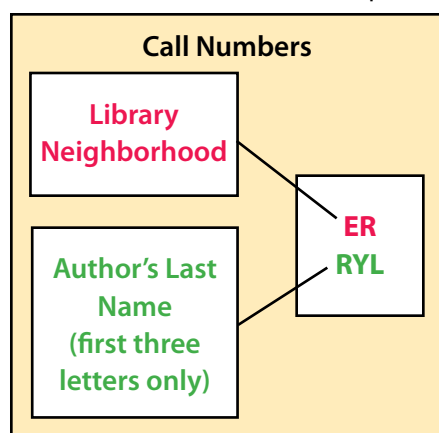
Do your students have trouble connecting books listed in the library catalog to actual books on the shelves? I have observed that many elementary students successfully search the online catalog, but then are at a loss to find the actual book. To help students master this task, I have created simple and fun call number lessons.

Call Numbers

For the purposes of these lessons, a call number has two parts: the neighborhood at the top and the location within the neighborhood on the bottom as shown in Figure 1.

I simply state that the bottom part is generally the first three letters of the author's last name. I also say that within the neighborhood, the books are in ABC order. For example, "RYL" for Cynthia Rylant would be a good starting point for my students, because Rylant's books are in all the library neighborhoods.

Figure 1.
Call number definition with two parts



Before the Lessons Begin

Before starting the lessons, a study of the library "neighborhoods" and how they are labeled must be done. It is worthwhile to consider the need for extra signage to help support students.

Putting the neighborhood part of the call number on the bookshelf signs can significantly help students connect the library catalog call number and the physical book location. For example, in Figure 2, the picture book neighborhood is labeled "PICTURE BOOKS" and the directional arrow signs include the call number "E."

Additionally, each neighborhood has a unique color. This color helps make the connection between the neighborhood and call number. Table 1 shows each neighborhood and its call number.

Table 1.
Neighborhoods and call numbers

Neighborhoods	Call Number
Everyone Readers	ER
Picture Books	E
Nonfiction/Informational	000-999
Fiction	FIC
Biographies	92

Let the Lessons Begin

When introducing call numbers, I explain the purpose of call numbers to show how they are useful. I point out the spine label on books and ask students to look at the numbers. During the first lesson, I point out the spine labels of a display of Cynthia Rylant's books. Students often

Figure 2. The picture book section's signage



overlook the numbers and meaning of spine labels, so I make a point of helping them understand that a call number works two ways:

- ▶ To help those working in the library know where to shelve the book.
- ▶ To help those trying to find the book know where to look for it.

The following 20-minute library lessons can be mixed and matched selectively or taught sequentially.

Lesson #1: Draw a Library Map Highlighting Neighborhoods

It is amazing how students who come to the library every week can take its organized for granted. To get them thinking about how the library is organized by neighborhoods, I ask them to picture themselves floating on the ceiling and looking down. What are the different sections of the library? Where do you find your books? How do you know where to go for what type of book? As I get answers, I draw a library map on the whiteboard as shown in Figure 3.

Coach the students to notice the color of the arrows at the ends of the bookshelves and capture that as well in the map. Sometimes it is helpful to have a student point to the specific arrow sign on the end of a bookcase to help the rest of the class understand the connection. In the map, tie the unique color of each neighborhood to the call number associated with that neighborhood. Using an interactive whiteboard, save the map slide for use in later lessons. (A large piece of paper works as well.)

Lesson #2: Virtual Tour of Neighborhoods

I take a photo of each neighborhood with the signage clearly visible. By creating a slideshow of these photos, I have a consistent and manageable virtual library tour. For the older grades, I ask them what section of the library is in the photo. Then I ask them leading questions, such as: Why would you go there? What would you find there? By pointing out the color

and call number on each sign, I reinforce the visual cues available in the library to help students. This slideshow also reminds students of areas of the library they may be neglecting.

Lesson #3: Match Call Numbers to Neighborhoods

After reviewing the neighborhood color-coding, I return to the concept of call numbers with the neighborhood on the top. I introduce the call number in a color matching each neighborhood. I then challenge the students by removing the color-coding and have them match the correct call number to the correct neighborhood as shown in Figure 4. This information needs to be reviewed repeatedly for most students. This is a whole class group activity, but in later reviews it could be done as an individual assessment. During this activity, the struggling students become apparent, and I provide them extra support during checkout time to help them create the connections.

Lesson #4: With a Call Number Identify the Neighborhood

Figure 5 shows an example of another way to review or assess student understanding of call number to neighborhood mapping. I set these slides up as a handheld clicker assessment, but this assessment could be done individually with written answers or a whole class discussion.

Let the Fun Begin!

Hopefully these lessons have sparked ideas for student lessons in your school that will create independent library users. My students eagerly participate in these lessons, and I think that yours will, too. So let the fun begin!◀

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Figure 3. Class-drawn library map



Figure 4. Call number to neighborhood match game

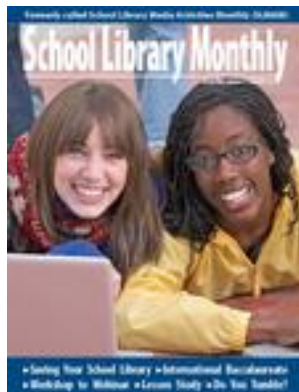
Call Number Match Game	
Biography	ER ABC
Fiction Chapter Book	E ABC
Informational or Nonfiction	FIC ABC
Everyone Readers	599 ABC
Picture Book	92 ABC

Figure 5. Call number assessment

In what section of the library would I find this call number?	
A Fiction	ER ABC
B Nonfiction/ Informational	
C Biography	
D Everyone Readers	

Look for more lesson plans in the *SLM* March 2011 issue with another article by Cheri Heaser, "More Fun with Call Numbers."

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